

# MAINE

*The Way Life Should Be.*

*Mineral Collecting*



**The Maine Publicity Bureau, Inc.**

## Quarries You May Visit

- #1 **Topsham:** The Fisher Quarry is located off Route 24 in Topsham. This locale is best known for crystals of topaz, green microlite, and dark blue tourmaline. It has also produced other minerals such as beryl, uraninite and cassiterite.
- #2 **Machiasport:** At an area known as Jasper Beach there is an abundance of vari-colored jasper and/or rhyolite specimens. Located on Route 92.
- #3 **Buckfield:** The Bennett Quarry, located between Buckfield and Paris Hill, has produced fine specimens of blue and pink beryl including some gem material. It is also known for crystals of quartz, green tourmaline and rare minerals.
- #4 **Casco:** The Chute Prospect is best known for vesuvianite. It is located east of Route 302-35. Crystals of "cinnamon" garnet, quartz and pyrite are also found here.
- #5 **Georgetown:** The Consolidated Feldspar Quarry has produced excellent specimens of gem citrine quartz, tourmaline and spodumene. Rose Quartz, cookeite and garnet are also found.
- #6 **Paris:** Mount Mica is world famous for tourmaline and this gem material was discovered here in 1821. This is one of the most likely places for a collector to find tourmaline. Mount Mica has produced a host of other minerals including beryl, cookeite, black tourmaline, columbite, lepidolite and garnet. **(Currently being mined)**
- #7 **Greenwood:** The Tamminen Quarry and the Harvard Quarry, both located near Route 219, have produced an interesting variety of minerals. The Tamminen Quarry is best known for pseudo-cubic quartz crystals, montmorillonite, spodumene and garnet. The Harvard Quarry is famous for specimens of superb purple apatite and unusual pseudomorphs. Also found at this site are multi-colored cookeites, cassiterite and quartz crystals.
- #8 **Newry:** The Dunton Quarry, located on Route 5, is the primary source of Maine tourmaline. It is world famous for amazing quantities of gem tourmaline that were mined during the 1972-1974 era and is, along with Mount Mica, one of the best places to search for tourmaline. The variety of other minerals found here included lepidolite, spodumene and beryl.
- #9 **Byron:** The first discovery of gold in the United States was made in Byron well before the California "gold rush." The east branch of the Swift River, on Route 17, is well known to gold panners which frequent the Coos Canyon area.

## Maine's Minerals and Gems

The abundance of minerals found in Maine attracts thousands of visitors each year. Nearly 300 varieties are native to our state and fine specimens and gems from Maine may be seen in museums all over the world. Once the winter snows have gone, novice and scientist alike are found searching Maine's many quarries hoping to find a prize specimen.

The search for minerals in Maine began with the arrival of the first settlers. Tourmaline, now our official state gemstone, was discovered at Mount Mica in Paris Hill in 1821 and this event precipitated commercial exploration and development of other quarries in Maine. This exploration, of course, sparked the interest of collectors whose number grows each year.

Mineral collecting, often known as "rockhounding", is a wonderful activity that the entire family can enjoy. Using good common sense for safety is all that's required. The only "must" is a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn. The equipment one needs is minimal and inexpensive. Most collectors enjoy having

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a small pick hammer, perhaps a chisel and a sack in which to carry specimens. Maine's quarries are primarily open pits that have been developed during operations for commercially valuable materials such as feldspar, mica and copper-bearing minerals. The actual collecting is done in the dump areas, or the "tailings", left by the miners. These dumps are usually where you'll make your search. Most quarries are reached by making a brief walk through a field or on a logging road in the woods. When you visit a quarry, it is important to obtain permission from the owners of the property.

Most of the mineral collecting in Maine occurs in southern Oxford and northern Androscoggin Counties. This area has a unique mineralization known as a granite pegmatite composed of quartz, feldspar and mica. These pegmatites have produced an interesting variety of minerals including such gem materials as aquamarine, garnet, amethyst, tourmaline and smoky quartz. Gold is also found in many streams and rivers in the western part of the state.

Naturally, all collectors hope to find fine specimens and gem quality pieces. The successful collector has to be aggressive and, most importantly, lucky! Reasonable expectations will make every collecting trip rewarding and fun. This is a unique recreational opportunity for young and old alike.

## Some Of The More Common Minerals

### Mica

Mica, commonly found in Maine's pegmatites, is transparent and occurs in flat sheets which may be very thin. Numerous commercial mining operations for mica have taken place here. When mica is brown to colorless it is called muscovite and the black material is known as biotite. A locale in Freeport produces lovely green material called fuschite. Lepidolite, or purple mica, is frequently found in tourmaline producing areas. Both fuschite and lepidolite occur as diminutive plates.

### Quartz

Quartz is another common mineral found here in Maine. Quartz may be rose, smoky, yellow or colorless. Crystals of colorless quartz are found in many quarries, but smoky or citrine colored quartz is less common. Massive rose quartz is available, but rose quartz crystals are rare.

### Garnet

An abundance of garnet, often occurring as 12 or 24 sided crystals, is also present here. Typically, these garnet crystals are small and opaque. Attempts to remove them from their matrix, or host mineral, are usually futile since garnet is typically brittle and breaks easily. Gem quality garnet is found in Maine, not in abundance.

### Tourmaline

Tourmaline is the best known and, perhaps, the most sought after gem material found in Maine. Tourmaline occurs in elongated crystals which have a vitreous luster. The crystals are recognizable by the tiny grooves running parallel to their length. The most commonly found tourmaline is black which is usually quite brittle. Transparent green, pink and blue tourmaline are the most valuable. Rarely, tourmaline crystals may have pink cores and an exterior of green. These are known as watermelon tourmalines and they are highly prized.

### Feldspar

Feldspar is found in abundance in the pegmatites of western Maine. This opaque material may be white, salmon colored or gray-green. Feldspar was mined for commercial purposes in Maine from 1872 until 1968. This activity made exploration of local quarries profitable.

### Beryl

Beryl is another sought after mineral found in the area. Huge beryl crystals exceeding thirty feet in length have been produced by one locale and a significant amount of smaller crystals have been found. Beryl is blue, green or blue-green in color and some golden yellow material has been found as well. Gem quality blue or blue-green beryl is known as aquamarine and it is highly prized. The rare pink morganite variety occurs in a few mines.

## Sources of Information Regarding Gems and Minerals

Perham, Jane C. **Gems & Minerals, A Guide to Rock-hounding in Maine**, Maine Geographic Series, 1983, 48 pgs., color photos. DeLorme Publishing, Freeport, Maine.

Perham, Jane C. **"Maine's Treasure Chest"**, 1987 Second Edition, 296 pgs., color photos, Quicksilver Publications, West Paris, Maine.

Kunz, George F. **Gems & Precious Stones of No. America**, 1967, Dover.

Morrill, Philip **Vol. I-Western Maine Mines & Minerals, Vol. II- Eastern Maine Mines & Minerals**.

Sinkankas, John **Prospecting for Gemstones & Minerals**, Rev. Ed., 1970, 398 pgs., Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Thompson, W. B., and others, **A Collector's Guide to Maine Mineral Localities**, 1988, Maine Geological Survey (address below).

Maps & publications including topographic maps, are available through:

Maine Geological Survey  
State House Station #22  
Augusta, Maine 04333  
287-2801

Some of the above publications are also available from the various gem and mineral shops throughout the state.

## GEM & MINERAL SHOPS

Area code in Maine is (207)

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### Coastal

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#### Wells 04090

Many Facettes, RR #2, Box 223, Route 1 (North), 646-4312  
Year-round (except February.) Off Season: 10-5, Summers 10-6. We specialize in Maine tourmaline, aqua and amethyst. Gemstones from around the world, jewelry & gifts.

#### Saco 04072

MacDonald's Mineral Museum, 34 Moody St. 284-4633  
Seasonal by chance or appointment.

#### Portland 04103

Dan & Pat's Rock Shop, 837 Ocean Ave. (Route 9), 774-1738.  
Open year-round, Thur-Sat. 11-5 & by phone appointment.

#### Cumberland 04021

Maine-ly Minerals Rock Shop, 144 Gray Road, Rte. 26 & 100  
829-5471. Open April-Dec; Sun-Thur 10-8; Fri. 10-2  
Crystals, minerals, gems, books, rock hound equipment, jewelry, carvings, souvenirs & gifts. Mine locations, map, etc. Maine Tourmaline etc.

#### Georgetown 04548

Downeast Mineral & Gem Shop, Harmons Harbor Rd, P.O. Box 238  
633-3883. Open seasonal 9am-10pm.

#### Newcastle 04553

Robert Foster Rock & Gem Shop, Route 1, 563-8150  
Open year-round 9am-4pm daily.



### **Belfast 04915**

Bennett's Down to Earth Gems & Minerals, Rte. 1 (East side of the Bridge)  
338-5530

Open year-round, Mon-Sat 9-6 & Sun 10-6.

Look for the Pink Dinosaur!

### **Bar Harbor 04609**

The Rock Shop, Willis & Sons, Main Street, 288-4935

Open year-round - Summer; Mon-Fri 9-9, Sat 10-5, Sun 1-6;

Winter; Mon-Fri 9-5. Closed Feb 7 thru March 4th. Hand crafted 14 Karat gold, semi-precious gem stone jewelry.

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## **Inland**

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### **Augusta 04330**

The Chickadee, Route 9, 3 miles south from Augusta.

Open Year-round by appointment only, 623-4249.

Rock shop, tools, lapidary supplies, field trip information, rough gem material, jewelry, gemologist.

### **East Winthrop 04343**

Winthrop Mineral Shop, (Rt. 202, 11, & 100)

Mineral Collecting/Gold Panning Field Trip Information, 395-4488.

Open April 1 to Dec. 24, Mon-Sat. 9:30-5:30.

Jewelry, gems, minerals, sea shells, gifts.

### **Buckfield 04220**

Poorspector's Rockshop, Rte. 1 Bryant Road

336-2888. Open year-round by appointment.

Maine minerals a specialty.

### **West Paris 04289**

Perham's Of West Paris, Routes 26 & 219 at Trap Corner, 674-2341.

Open year-round, 7 days a week 9am-5pm.

Jewelry, gems, minerals. Fine mineral museum. Quarries open free to the public. Specializing in Maine Tourmaline.

### **Rumford Point**

Martin's Minerals, Martin's Road, 364-3355.

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## **Events**

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### **Annual Rock-Hound Round-Up**

Westbrook College Gym, Portland

June 12-13, 1993. Sat & Sun 10am-5pm.

Sponsor: Maine Mineralogical & Geological Society

Contact: 781-4180. Buy, sell swap, auction.

### **Annual Western Maine Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Festival**

Telstar Regional High School (Rt 26), Bethel

July 10-11, 1993 — Sat 9-5 & Sun 10-4

Sponsor: Oxford County Mineral & Gem Association

Contact: 364-3159

Exhibits, field trips, demonstrations, dealers and door prizes.

### **Annual Gem Show**

Alfond Arena, Colby College, Waterville

Sponsor: Water-Oak Gem and Mineral Society

July 24-25, 1993 — Sat 10-6 & Sun 10-5

Contact: 547-3154

### **Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show**

Augusta Armory, Western Ave., Augusta

August 28-29, 1993 — Sat & Sun 10-5

Sponsor: Kennebec Rocks and Minerals Club

Contact: 873-6270

**Gem & Mineral  
Clubs, Societies, and Associations  
(Visitors Always Welcome)**

**Coastal Maine Mineral Club**

Carroll Foster, Sec.  
75 Ocean House Road  
Cape Elizabeth, Maine 04107

**Downeast Gem & Mineral Club**

T. Frahmman  
RR 3, Box 1651  
Ellsworth, Maine 04605  
667-6205

**Federation of Maine Mineral & Gem Clubs**

Fred Maitland  
8 Bea Lane  
Cumberland, Maine 04021  
829-5753

**Kennebec Rock & Minerals Club**

Leigh Walton  
57 Windsor Street  
Randolph, Maine 04345  
582-6153

**Lincoln County Gem & Mineral Society**

Leigh Walton  
57 Windsor Street  
Randolph, Maine 04345  
582-6153

**Maine Mineralogical & Geological Society**

Paul Dionne  
14 Farnell Drive  
Yarmouth, Maine 04096  
846-1447

**Oxford County Mineral & Gem Assoc.**

Ellis Quinn  
HCR 62, Box 36  
Byron, Maine 04275  
364-3159

**Water-Oake Gem & Mineral Society**

Ellery Borow  
P.O. Box 47  
Waterville, Maine 04901  
547-3154

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